DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 078 RC 023 074

AUTHOR Krynowsky, Bernie
TITLE Rural Professionals: A Tertiary Preparation Model.
PUB DATE 2000-05-00
NOTE 4p.; In: Issues Affecting Rural Communities (II). Proceedings of the International Conference [on] Rural Communities & Identities in the Global Millennium (Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, May 1-5, 2000); see RC 023 040.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Curriculum; *Curriculum Development; *Experiential Learning; Higher Education; Interdisciplinary Approach; Mentors; Models; Practicums; *Professional Education; *Rural Education; *Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Rural Studies

ABSTRACT

An outline is proposed for a tertiary course in rural studies for professionals such as teachers, nurses, and social workers that would better prepare them for rural service. The course could be an elective in general studies or give credit toward professional certification. Key components for effective rural preparation of professionals should be knowledge about social and professional aspects of living and working in rural communities, exposure to work and life in a rural community, and experience working with a mentor in a rural setting. Coursework will consist of eight 3-hour workshops with a rural placement practical work experience for 2-3 weeks. There will be a readings book of four to seven relevant articles related to the course content. Assignments will consist of researching and writing a rural issues paper, completing a major project related to the chosen profession, completing a 2- to 3-week rural practical experience, and presenting a critical analysis of the experience. The eight workshops will be orientation day; historical and social contexts of rural communities; analysis of issues affecting rural professionals; finding out more about rural professionals and their work; case studies, communication skills, and problem solving; cultural perspectives simulation; major assignment presentations; and debriefing interview after the practical experience. (TD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J.C. Montgomery

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

ED 455 078

TECHNICAL PAPERS

Rural Professionals: A Tertiary Preparation Model

Bernie Krynowsky, Canada

Abstract

Research has identified factors or issues that affected rural professionals' perceptions of living and working in rural communities. The investigation into these perceptions was most often related to a common goal of developing and maintaining excellent professional practices and practitioners within rural communities. The author interpreted the research regarding issues and needs of rural professionals in order to design a tertiary interdisciplinary course to help achieve the goal. The conference presentation revolved around the proposal of a tertiary interdisciplinary course. The major components of the course included: presentations and readings on historical, social, and work contexts of rural communities, case studies on rural professional experiences, a problem solving workshop with students from interdisciplinary areas (e.g. social work, nurses, teachers) exploring and finding solutions to case study rural and multicultural scenarios, interviews with professionals working in rural communities, and mentor guided practical experiences in rural communities with interdisciplinary cohort groups. Feedback on the proposed course was provided during a critical analysis by 18 participants. Some suggestions were incorporated into a revised overview design which will be presented in this paper. Further critical analysis and suggestions from readers are welcomed.

The intention of this paper is to propose an outline for a tertiary course in rural studies for professionals such as teachers, nurses, and social workers. This will entail providing an overview of major needs for rural professionals, outlining specific outcomes for the course, and suggesting possible relevant assignments and learning activities related to the outcomes. This tertiary course could be an elective in general studies or be given credit towards professional certification.

Important Components for a Rural Studies Course

A review of the research suggested that the following areas should be key components for effective rural preparation of professionals:

- knowledge about social and professional aspects of living and working in rural communities
- exposure to work and life in a rural community
- experience working with a mentor in a rural setting

Proposed Course Overview

Course outcomes: Prospective rural professionals will be able to:

- have a better understanding of the issues facing rural professionals by identifying and discussing critically potential positive and negative features of working in a rural community
- become familiar with the social, cultural, and historical contexts of rural communities
- interact with other professionals in the identification of rural issues and be able to analyze case studies in order to create possible solutions to professional challenges
- experience and reflect on life and work in a rural community with the support of other fellow professionals and a mentor

Course structure and learning activities

Course work will consist of eight three hour workshops with a rural placement practical work experience for 2-3 weeks. There will be a readings book of four to seven relevant articles related to the course content. Assignments will consist of: researching and writing a rural issues paper, completing a major project related to their chosen profession, completing a two to three week rural practical experience, and presenting a critical analysis of the experience.

Lesson #1- Orientation Day

Have guests who have worked in rural setting come to the first class. Social interactions and formal and informal presentations by some of the guests. Possibly have a video or interactive video conference of an individual who is currently working in a rural area. They can address the joys and challenges of their personal and professional lives with questions and answers. Stories about rural experiences will be read and discussions held around the issues that have arisen. In the last hour, the instructor can review of the course outline, readings, and assignments.

Another possibility might be to have a 2 day excursion to a rural community to visit various facilities and professionals who live and work there. In preparation for the next lesson students will be asked to come prepared to discuss two critical issues or questions regarding living and working in a rural community.

RC 023074

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ASSIGNMENT(20%): students to prepare an issues paper which entails a critical analysis of 3 issues revolving around living or working in a rural community.

Lesson #2- Historical and Social Contexts of Rural Communities

The instructor will present a historical perspective on how and why rural communities have been established. They can provide foundational information on: what an operational definition for rural might be, reasons (historical and social) for rural communities, characteristics of rural communities and isolated families. Have students come up with a list of associations between the foundations and issues previously identified.
Student preparation for next day- readings on the historical and social contexts of rural communities and issues paper presentation.

Lesson #3- Analysis of Issues Affecting Rural Professionals

Have students share their analysis of their issues paper with brief presentations to small groups within the class. Have a whole group review some key issues and implications for rural professionals. Have discussions on key points revealed in the readings on the social, historical contexts of rural communities. Move into a role play situation regarding situations of issues within a rural setting. For example one of the scenarios might revolve around a rumor that has been going around town about a certain professionals unusual behavior. Different roles could be assigned in the plot. The plot is then analyzed from various role positions.

Further instructor presentation on rural communities including societal values, social structures, and community development.

Lesson# 4- Finding out more about rural professionals and their work

Review key concepts regarding rural issues and rural foundations. Link these to the importance of finding out more about their chosen profession in a major assignment.
MAJOR ASSIGNMENT (50%) Students will be asked to complete a research project on their respective professions in terms of: defining some of the job descriptions, describing how to get a position in a rural area, designing a questionnaire for an interview with a colleague/s working in a rural setting to find out more about life and work conditions. Ideally the course would have a rural placement so that the individual could live and work in a rural setting. If not it would be essential for the individual to visit a rural center to complete the project. Class time would be spent in planning and researching this project. Access to internet and library resources will be important for this lesson.

Lesson #5- Case Studies, communication skills, and problem solving-
Presentation of scenarios of situations occurring in rural setting where professionals typically interact. For example how would a teacher, social, worker, nurse work together in a situation where a student/client was experiencing some physical abuse at home. The workshop will consist of 2 or 3 scenarios whereby a mixed group of aspiring professionals (students in the class) would attempt to identify what roles they would play in assisting the individuals. There would be debriefing and analysis in a whole class setting. It would be excellent if rural professionals or professionals in the area were available as debriefers or consultants (e.g. nurse , teacher, or social worker).

Lesson #6- Cultural Perspectives Simulation (BAFA BAFA)

One of the main issues identified in the literature is the rural professional fitting into the culture of the community. This is very important for successful practice in a rural setting. This activity is a powerful simulation in which various cultural perspectives are acted out and analyzed. The students get to experience what it is like to be another culture trying to express a point of view. Synthesis and analysis of this role play will result in a list of considerations for how they can successfully become part of the community. Debriefing will result in a list of key points to consider when working in another cultural setting.

Practical Experiences (2-3 weeks) in Rural Setting

The students, hopefully working with mentors or sponsors, will work as an assistant in their chosen profession. This experience could also possibly be a term end practicum as there are likely other courses taken concurrently.
ASSIGNMENT (20%) - Students will be asked to complete a daily critical analysis journal on their experiences. The journal would have predetermined criteria for excellence. The practical experience would be given a pass/fail rating with a report jointly written by the student, mentor, and possibly the tertiary instructor.
Lesson #7- Major Assignment Presentations
Students will be asked to make a 20 minute presentation (Groups of 3-4) on their major assignment on their chosen profession. The student presenters will be asked to prepare a written analysis of their presentation based on the feedback and discussion generated by peers in their group (15% of mark). The major assignment (described in lesson 4) will also be handed in at this point (35% of mark).

Lesson #8 Debriefing Interview after the practical experience

There would be a one hour debriefing of field experience done in small groups and a half hour sharing of key experiences in the whole group setting. The students will book a one to one interview with an instructor/instructors. This interview would entail representing and discussing their learning experiences. It would be an opportunity for reflective analysis and closure to the course. The quality of the interview analysis would be judged on predetermined questions and criteria for 10% of the course mark.

Celebration- Gathering of students in a social setting to mingle and share their collective experiences. Could have some skits or story telling regarding their experiences. Invite other individuals with experiences in rural communities.

Closing Thoughts

The intention of this paper is to provide a possible model for improved tertiary preparation of rural professionals. To this end, the model needs to be critically analyzed for its worthwhileness and feasibility. Additionally, there needs to be more attention to the details (e.g. what readings, what criteria for assignments etc.). Most importantly there needs to be an initial implementation and trial. These challenges lie ahead.